

HRSA 18-014 Project Title: Enhancing Oral Health Workforce Activities to Increase Access to Care for Populations Living in Dental Health Professional Shortage Areas in Nevada

Applicant Organization Name: Nevada Division of Public and Behavioral Health, Oral Health Program

Address: 3811 W. Charleston Blvd. Suite 205, Las Vegas, Nv 89102

Project Director Name: Dr. Antonina Capurro and Ms. Judy White

Contact Phone Numbers: 702-774-2573 (voice); 702-774-2521 (fax)

E-Mail Address: acapurro@health.nv.gov; judwhite@health.nv.gov

Funds requested: Salaries and wages, fringe benefits, travel, stipend for patient treatment, materials and supplies, and collaborative educational modules.

Funding Priorities Identified: 1 utilizing public health-endorsed dental hygienist, 2 collaborative partnership with rural communities, 3 providing access to care through teledentistry and case management 4 formal relationships with referring dental providers, 5 rural population health, 6 Medicaid leadership, and 7 education/introduction to the dental profession.

Purpose. The purpose of this program is to increase the availability of oral health services in rural Nevada through utilization of public health endorsed dental hygienists (PHE RDHs) in association with local dentists and coordinate treatment planning and case management through teledentistry. The focus of this grant will center on Elko, Mineral, Nye, and Pershing Counties.

This program will have four foci: 1) to expand the use of licensed PHE RDHs to treat patients in rural settings through focused training to ensure this provider type is aware of endorsement requirements, scope of work in unsupervised situations, able to utilize teledental equipment to coordinate patient care with a partner dentist, 2) to provide training to the existing general dentist workforce in rural Nevada to specifically address oral health care needs of rural patients and create dental partners for PHE RDHs through teledentistry, 3) to develop health care networks in the community to promote better access to and understanding of oral health care needs of rural patients, and 4) develop introductory dental professional educational modules targeting engagement from students in rural communities.

Methods: Elements of the ecological perspective of health promotion and practice will be incorporated into this innovative program which will engage not only the individual patient but focus on the sociocultural environment. Amendment of the state Medicaid plan to include public health endorsed hygienists as a billable provider type is a public policy priority that is necessary to support the sustainability of independent dental hygienists in rural communities. Building a relationship of trust between PHE RDHs and dentists working in and around DHPSAs is a fundamental component that will occur throughout the life of the grant. Building a strong team culture will enable dentists and dental hygienists to synergistically work to provide assessment and early detection, control, and management of oral conditions. In so doing, they also slowly change the culture and attitudes towards the dental profession and create dental homes for patients. The program will provide training and employment opportunities for a diverse group of primary care dental professionals in the health care network to address the needs of underserved, rural individuals at the county and state level.

Results: The creation of a sustainable business model led by independent public health endorsed dental hygienists (PHE RDHs) and the mobilization of the dental community to provide wrap around services for patients served by PHE RDHs will result in increased access to care for rural communities. Teledentistry will provide a communication mechanism that has not been utilized in the state to provide case management and treatment planning for patients in rural communities. Key areas of concentration will include expansion of public health endorsed dental hygienists (PHE RDHs), Medicaid recognition of this provider type, enhanced reimbursement for dentists to provide care to patients referred by PHE RDHs, and dental career modules for pre-professional students living in and near Dental Health Professional Shortage Areas (DHPSAs). Focus will be on the coordination/support of the dental workforce via integration of oral health education activities and streamlined Medicaid systems.

Summary: This program will be under the direction of Dr. Antonina Capurro, State Dental Health Officer, and Ms. Judy White, State Public Health Dental Hygienist. Assessment and evaluation of all program elements including retention and increase of Medicaid providers in DHPSA, treatment outcomes from PHE RDH/dental teams, didactic and experiential learning through collaborative partners such as AHEC, program organization, outcomes, and structure will be coordinated by Oral Health Grants Manager. This initiative will result in the creation of public health endorsed dental hygienists (PHE RDHs) and dentist teams that are supported and equipped to successfully maintain the oral health and overall health of rural populations.